The Married Bachelor

A Comic Piece
1 act

By
P P O'Callaghan

The Married Bachelor.

Sir Charles. Clumsy blockhead ! see how you have frightened her !

Act I. Scene I.

THE MARRIED BACHELOR;

OR, MASTER AND MAN:

A COMIC PIECE,

In One Act,

BY P. P. O'CALLAGHAN, Esq.

PRINTED FROM THE ACTING COPY, WITH REMARKS, BIOGRAPHICAL AND CRITICAL, BY D.—G.

To which are added,

A DESCRIPTION OF THE COSTUME,—CAST OF THE CHARACTER ENTRANCES AND EXITS,—RELATIVE POSITIONS OF THE PERFORMERS ON THE STAGE, AND THE WHOLE OF THE STAGE BUSINESS.

As performed at the

THEATRES ROYAL, LONDON.

EMBELLISHED WITH A FINE ENGRAVING,
From a Drawing taken in the Theatre.

LONDON:

G. H. DAVIDSON, PETER'S HILL, DOCTORS' COMMONS,
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REMARKS.

The Married Bachelor.

A PLEASANT farce from a pleasant country!—a light summer wine, gay and sparkling, like champagne in pint bottles! The French are unrivalled in these little *tableaux de societé*, in which the actors seem exactly fitted to their parts, and move in them with an ease and grace that appears nature itself. They have little plot, but great care is bestowed in the delineation of the characters. Sir Charles Courtall has married a lady with two omnipotent attractions—an infinity of charms, and five thousand a year. But Sir Charles is a man—a mortal man; and a cherry cheek and a roguish eye are sure to put him off his equilibrium. Though a young Benedick, he is an old soldier: and can counterfeit a passion, put on a long face, and tell a white lie with commendable gravity. No man is a hypocrite to his valet-de-chambre; and Sharpe possesses a catalogue raisonnée of his master's peculiarities. This plausible varlet is to be promoted from pimp to steward, with a handsome annuity, on condition that he remains single; but, like master like man, he has gone to church for the first time since he was christened, and taken unto himself a pretty young villager, Grace Jenkins, just to beguile his six weeks' tedious sojourn among green fields and greenhorns! My lady is off on a visit, and her carriage is hardly out of sight, ere her disconsolate partner proposes to himself a philosophical ramble, to assuage the pangs of a short absence; and Sharpe is appointed his locum tenens, with supreme authority over cellar, larder, cook, carriages, coachman, and horses. The servants are marshalled in array before him; his commands are pompously promulgated,—a drive in the curricle, and a dinner

in the harbour, for himself and Grace! In the midst of this hey-day and bustle, the well-known voice of Sir Charles summons the astonished parvenu into his presence. An odd adventure: about a mile from his mansion, he just caught a glimpse of a bewitching little charmer, who, sylph-like, glided from him, and escaped among the trees. Sharpe, unmindful of his own glass-house, pops the saddle on the wrong horse, and the horns on the wrong head: 'tis the exciseman's young wife! But the unexpected presence of Grace dispels the illusion. "Pretty service!" as Wellington coolly cried, when his brave veterans were mowing down the French braggarts at Waterloo, like blades of grass, "Pretty service!"—he has received a bribe to smuggle his own goods! The secret or the pension—that is the question: whether 'tis better to pocket the affront, or blab out the wedding, and lose *one* needful part of the beggar's benison? The baronet resolves to have not only grace with dinner, but dinner with Grace; and, to his infinite surprise, the French cook announces that it is ready to be served up! But when the curricle is wanted on a sudden emergency, and he finds it is already ordered out, he rises into ecstasy, and loads this sultan of careful servants with golden opinions and gold. The dinner scene is inconceivably ludicrous. Sharpe, in his confusion, breaks dishes and plates; fills a bumper, which he tosses off himself; and then brims the salt-cellar. But his relief is at hand: it is announced that Lady Courtall is coming up the lime-tree walk! Dinner and Grace are hurried away in quick time; and her ladyship is highly gratified to find that the report of her lord's sudden indisposition (a trick devised by Sharpe when on the horns of a dilemma) is a false alarm. To recover her fright, she will rest awhile in the pavilion (the retreat of Grace!); and Sharpe, seeing no remedy, resolves to save his master, though he lose his pension. He tells the secret of his marriage, and introduces his wife as the attendant engaged by Sir Charles to wait upon her ladyship. The baronet is in raptures with this admirable stroke of policy, which he

places to the account of Sharpe's abundant, natural, and ready stock of lies. Lady Courtall is delighted with these little delicate attentions; adopts her new attendant; and laughingly whispers Sir Charles that Sharpe has just stolen a sly kiss of Grace. This horrible indecorum rouses the virtuous ire of the married rake; he calls the offender into his presence, and, after a severe reprimand, places him in a critical predicament, in order to illicit the real truth. Sharpe, to keep up appearances, turns his marriage into a joke, and declines a chaste salute which poor Grace, in the fullness of her heart, offers him in token of forgiveness. Quarrelling, and in tears! Her ladyship interposes as mediator, and the whole mystery of the marriage is cleared up, more we suspect to the satisfaction of the ladies and the married bachelor, than the married rake.

This piece has always been a great favourite. Elliston, the original representative of Sir Charles, was exquisitely salacious; Mrs. Fitzwilliam played with her wonted simplicity and spirit; and Harley was, what he always is, highly comical in the lying valet. This was the cast at Drury Lane; at the Adelphi, Yates and Wrench were master and man.

☞ D.——G.

STAGE DIRECTIONS.

The Conductors of this Work print no Plays but those which they have seen acted. The *Stage Directions* are given from personal observations, during the most recent performances.

R. means *Right;* L. *Left;* C. *Centre;* R.C. *Right of Centre;* L.C. *Left of Centre;* D.F. *Door in the Flat, or Scene running across the back of the Stage;* C.D.F. *Centre Door in the Flat;* R.D.F. *Right Door in the Flat;* L.D.F. *Left Door in the Flat;* R.D. *Right Door;* L.D. *Left Door;* S.E. *Second Entrance;* U.E. *Upper Entrance;* C.D. *Centre Door.*

*** *The Reader is supposed to be on the Stage, facing the Audience.*

Cast of the Characters

As originally sustained at the Adelphi Theatre.

Sir Charles Courtall .....Mr. Yates.
Sharpe .....Mr. Wrench.
Truss .....Mr. Sanders.
John .....Mr. Smith.
Thomas .....Mr. Miller.
Labroche .....Mr. Gouriet.

Lady Courtall .....Miss Curties.
Grace .....Mrs. Fitzwilliam.

Costume.

SIR CHARLES.—Blue frock Coat, Buff Waistcoat, Trowsers and boots.

SHARPE.—A smart coat of white livery with red facings, fawn coloured breeches, Top boots.

TRUSS, JOHN, and THOMAS in similar livery, with shoes and white stockings.

LABROCHE.—White linen Jacket, Trowsers, apron, and Cap.

LADY COURTALL.—White satin dress, hat and feathers.

GRACE.—Pink petticoat—Lead coloured open gown—check apron, white handkerchief with a coloured one over it, mob cap and gipsy hat, mittens.

THE MARRIED BACHELOR.

SCENE I.—*A Park—Gates in centre.* R.——*A Bower* L.——*A practicable little gate in Park wall; nearer to the audience, a Pavilion.*

Enter SHARPE, *from centre gate, as if speaking to some one without.*

Sharpe. Certainly, Madam, you may rely upon me; I hope your ladyship will enjoy the ride. (*Whip smacks without.*) Smack—crack—away they go; and away I go to my dear Grace! [*running towards gate in Park wall.*

Enter SIR CHARLES. L.

Sir C. Sharpe! Sharpe!—Was that my dear Lady Courtall that drove off then?

Sharpe. (*startled.*) Yes, Sir. (*aside.*) Who the devil sent for you?—As her Ladyship's Aunt lives only five miles from this, she will soon be there.

Sir C. How long will she be away? I thought I heard her say something about three days.

Sharpe. My Lady did say she would be absent about three days.

Sir C. Lady Courtall, is a charming woman! Do you know, Sharpe, that marriage has not in the least cooled the ardour of my love for her?

Sharpe. Is it possible? Are you still in love with her, sir?

Sir C. (*coldly.*) I doat on her: and during the six months that we have been in the country——

Sharpe. Six months! six weeks, sir.

Sir C. What, only six weeks?—Well, well, six weeks, or six months it does not much matter which—during those mo—weeks, that we have passed in the country together, I have hourly discovered new graces in her. Her affection for me seems to increase with my perception

of her mental, as well as personal charms. With what reluctance she left me even for three days. I could have found fortitude sufficient to spare her for a week; she has, however, but the weakness of her sex. I never think of my marriage but with delight.

Sharpe. Oh, Sir! I rather think, your marriage has delighted many a married man.

Sir C. (*smiling.*) As for that, Sharpe——But I am quite an altered man. I grant that I did, now and then—with this figure and—but that's all past. I swear now, that my morals are—(*crosses to* L.—) What shall I do to pass away the time during the absence of Lady Courtall? It will hang heavily on my hands while severed from my dear wife.

Sharpe. Suppose you were to follow her—(*aside.*) I wish I could get rid of him.

Sir C. Why so I would, but it would appear so uxorious.

Sharpe. You are dressed, Sir—a stroll through the village would amuse you—or a ride.

Sir C. Do you think so? I'll for a few minutes—perhaps an hour—perhaps—if any thing detain me beyond that time—if in the evening—nobody need sit up for me to-night.

Sharpe. Shall I—

Sir C. No, no—you may remain. You have been a faithful servant, and I will allow you to be lord and master here, during your mistress' absence and mine. The only service I require of you, is to see that the decorations, which my dear wife lately spoke of, be attended to and completed, in every respect, previous to her return. Get her also a lady's maid, as you know she is without one at present: in short, let every thing be done to convince my charming Lady Courtall, that her image alone, fills the heart of her affectionate husband. (*crosses.*) While I take my ramble, the house is yours—

Sharpe. Cellar and larder too, Sir?

Sir C. Yes, cellar and all. I will now stroll among the surrounding shady scenes, to indulge in philosophical reflection; to chew the sweet and bitter cud, as Shakspeare says. [*Exit through the gates.*

Sharpe. Philosophical reflection! I think I can give a

tolerably shrewd guess at the nature of your philosophy, good master of mine. If I am right in my conjecture, so much the better for me; 'twill bring grist to my mill. My situation with the Baronet, is not what it was when he was a single man. He has no steward, and has promised me that birth—then I may pick up a trifle or two. Master of this house, cellar and all! Egad, I'll have a rare day of it with my dear Grace—I wonder where she can be all this while. I hope Sir Charles won't see her in the course of his *philosophical* rambles. What would become of poor Sharpe if he did? To be married, not only without his consent, but against his express commands! Luck, however, does befriend me this time; Sir Charles and my lady away, I may treat my pretty little wife in style. I wonder how many husbands there are who would believe that all my anxiety is only to meet my wife. (*two knocks at the small gate.*) Here she is. [*opens the gate.*

Enter GRACE, *through gate.* L.

Grace. A pretty thing, Sir, to keep me waiting this hour, as if I were only your sweetheart.

Sharpe. Well, never mind, love; don't be angry; I won't do so any more. [*offers to kiss her.*

Grace. No, I won't, I'm vexed.

Sharpe. Come, come, kiss and be friends again. (*they kiss.*) There now, you little rogue, you—isn't that better than quarrelling?

Grace. Why, I can't say but what it is.—See there's the certificate of our marriage—be careful of it, for if you lose it— [*Sharpe puts it in his pocket.*

Sharpe. I know—we should have to begin every thing afresh.

Grace. I begin to think it very hard that I am bound to keep our marriage so close a secret. Now do only let me tell it to my two cousins, and to three or four intimate friends, and to——

Sharpe. A pretty way that, of keeping a secret! you may as well give it at once to the Bellman.

Grace. Only let me tell it to——

Sharpe. My dear Grace, you know my love for you is ardent and sincere.

Grace. Yes, but one can't bear to be called *Miss,* when one isn't a Miss: it makes me blush so.

Sharpe. But, my love, I've told you before, how angry Sir Charles would be if he knew I was married; for he settled a pension on me provided I lived single, and continued in his service, over and above my wages.

Grace. Lord, how Sir Charles must hate us then!

Sharpe. Quite the contrary; he adores a petticoat, but hates matrimony.

Grace. That's very strange, when he's a married man himself.

Sharpe. (*aside.*) That's the very reason, perhaps.—Very true, but there—there was a beautiful woman, and five thousand a year as a bribe, and many a man has sold himself for much less. He says, that a servant, however active he may have been before marriage, is good for nothing after; so lazy, so——

Grace. He's very right, for since we have been married, you do nothing, but——

Sharpe. I'll do better by and bye;—one word now, would ruin us for ever. He has promised to make me his steward, and the perquisites then, you know, will set me above fear.

Grace. How long will that be about?

Sharpe. Oh! only a year and half—or two years—or—

Grace. What! must I keep the secret during two years?

Sharpe. It would be difficult for a woman to do that, I confess.

Grace. But in that time do you think we shall get rich enough to live ever after like a lady and gentleman, and ride in a carriage?

Sharpe. That we shall. Egad, you shall ride in one this very day!

Grace. Shall I? Oh, Gemini!

Sharpe. Bless your merry heart, you shall have a ride in a curricle and pair!

Grace. My dear William! [*embraces him.*

Sharpe. Oh, you coaxing baggage! Grace,—how often I say Grace,—you must make yourself prodigiously smart, for I shall drive you round the park and village myself—pompously.

Grace. Lord! how I should like to stand by the road-

side and see myself go by in a curricle and pair. Oh, the powers!

Sharpe. There, take the key of the little gate, that you may let yourself in, if I should be elsewhere when you return. Make all the haste you can.

Grace. I warrant me. I will be back in five minutes: and when I've put on the pretty new gown you gave me, and my bonnet and all, the folks will say, that we are the handsomest couple in all Warwickshire.

[*Exit by small gate.*

Sharpe. Now to make them look about dinner, et cetera. Holloa! Thomas, John, Truss!—Where the devil are these lazy rascals? What, no one coming? Let them make my master wait if they choose; damme, I'll teach them the difference.

JOHN *and all the rest of the* SERVANTS *come running on, from* R.

Sharpe. Oh! there you are, are you? Now attend to the orders I am going to give you.

Truss. Why, we thought that our master being out, we might—

Sharpe. (*interrupting him.*) Yes, you *might*, I dare say—but if Sir Charles *is* gone out for a day or so, he has left me factotum—invested me with ample powers, as the great men say.—Look therefore, that you obey my minutest order, without the slightest murmur.—No kitchen-conspiracy—no stable-grumbling—I know ye. In the first place, in about an hour, let me have dinner served.

John. We'll attend to you, as we would to our master.

Sharpe. Will you?—much obliged to you.—D'ye think I want to be the last served in the house?—Oh, you are the new French Cook, an't you?

Labroche. Yes, Sare; I come here yesterday before to-day.

Sharpe. Well, then, to-day before to-morrow, I shall require a sample of your skill. Let me have a most exquisite and delicate assortment of dainties—dinner for two, enough for six—a lady and gentleman, with remarkably good appetites. Truss, do you get the curricle ready.

Truss. The curricle! I wanted to clean it up well—it wants it plaguily.

Sharpe. I tell you, I shall want to ride in the curricle.

Thomas. *In* the curricle?

Sharpe. Aye *in* the curricle, you booby—I can go behind any day.

Thomas. Well—

John. But—

Truss. Mister Sharpe.

Sharpe. Don't Sharpe and But me. Let me have dinner ready at two o'clock (*to the Cook.*)—And you (*to Truss.*) the curricle and outriders; Sir Charles has left me his orders, and if you—

[*Sir Charles is heard without calling, "Sharpe."*

Servants. Here is Sir Charles, I'm off.

[*Exeunt Cook, &c.* R.

Sharpe. Sir Charles! Oh, its impossible! he can't have—

Sir C. (*without.*) Sharpe—Sharpe!

Sharpe. Confound it, it is he though. What can have sent him back so soon? How unlucky! Grace will be here directly, and if that Bashaw of a master of mine once sets eye on her, she's lost—and I'm lost! What shall I do?—Here's one of the comforts of a married life! I'll run off before he catches me and tell—

[*as he hurries towards the small gate,*

Enter SIR CHARLES, *from centre gate.*

Sir C. Sharpe!

Sharpe. (*with affected surprise.*) Sir.—Bless me, Sir, returned so quickly!—no accident I hope? (*Sharpe anxiously watches the gate.*) I wish there had been. [*aside.*

Sir C. Yes, and a most unlucky one too. You would little suppose what has ruffled me.

Sharpe. (*trying to look cheerful.*) Excuse me, sir—how far off the mark should I be, if I said—a petticoat?

Sir C. Why, faith, not a mile. Two or three days ago, I saw one of the most bewitching little creatures in the world. Just now, I caught a glimpse of her again, but lost her in a moment, and was not able to find which way she turned among the cursed trees.

Sharpe. (*aside.*) An intrigue afoot!—so much the better for me—

Sir C. I popped into every cottage round, yet all in vain; I saw plenty of pretty girls, but not one to compare to my little lost sheep.

Sharpe. (*aside.*) Egad, if you lay hold of her, she is a lost sheep.

Sir C. Such features—such bloom—such a shape—such a tout ensemble!

Sharpe. A what, Sir?

Sir C. A tout ensemble.

Sharpe. Is that her nose?

Sir C. Pooh! (*crosses to* L.)

Sharpe. (*aside.*) I have it—it must have been the old exciseman's young wife.—Sir, I know the enchantress, and promise, that, before the day is out, you shall see her here. Indeed, I had purposed surprising you with the sight of such charms, but accident, it seems, has anticipated me.

Sir C. My faithful Sharpe! You know I am neither ungrateful nor ungenerous. Let me but see her again, and twenty guineas shall be your reward.

[GRACE *opens the gate,* (L.—) *and comes in without seeing Sir Charles, or being seen by Sharpe.*

Sharpe. I think I hear them clinking in my pocket already. Poor Guage! Poor Devil!

Sir C. (*perceiving Grace, who is confounded at the sight of Sir Charles.*) What do I see? There, (*gives Sharpe a purse.*) there, thou best of servants, thou hast well deserved it.

Sharpe. Pay me beforehand, Sir! No, wait till the poor husband—(*turns round and sees Grace.*) Fire—Faggots—Devils and Horns!

Grace. I beg pardon, Sir—I—I—excuse me, Sir, but, Mister Sharpe—(*gets between Sharpe and Sir Charles, and gives Sharpe the key.*

Sir C. No apologies, my pretty maid; Mr. Sharpe told you to come, but it was I who wished to speak to you. (*aside.*) What an ingenuous looking creature it is!

Sharpe. (*whispers to Grace.*) It is Sir Charles—our secret—Mum. (*aside.*) Oh, lord!

Sir C. What's your name, my dear?

Grace. Grace, at your service, Sir.

Sharpe. (*aside.*) Grace, at his service.

Grace. Daughter of old Gertrude, who lives at the farther end of the village.

Sir C. I am afraid poor old Gertrude is not so well off as she was formerly. She shall come to Courtly Hall—We'll take care of you both. Sharpe will be delighted to take care of the old lady; he's such a good-natured soul—As for you, you shall be—let me see—the nursery maid.

Sharpe. (*who has been in much agitation ever since Grace came in, gets between her and Sir Charles, and, while talking endeavours to make the former go away.*) In a nursery without children!—Come, that's a sinecure, however.

Sir C. (*pushes Sharpe away.*) Well, you shall take all the linen of the house under your charge; that will just suit you.

Grace. (*Observing that Sharpe is making signs, behind Sir Charles, to her not to accept any situation.*) If you please, sir, I couldn't do it.

Sir C. Well then, you shall—

Grace. Nor that neither, Sir.

Sir C. You can wash, spin, sew, knit garters,—zounds! you can turn your hand to something, can't you?

Grace. No, Sir, I can't do any thing.

Sir C. The devil, you can't!—Why how do you pass your time at home?

Grace. I make cream cheese—

Sir C. The very thing—I sent for you expressly for that.—You shall be my dairymaid. I am a perfect gourmand when cream cheese is set before me—and so is Sharpe; an't you, my boy? [*slapping him on the back.*

Sharpe. No, Sir, it always curdles on my stomach—curse cheese!

Grace. But, Sir—

Sir C. Never mind him, my dear, but go and instal thyself queen of the curd, thou bewitching cheese-presser!

Grace. I must go home, if you please, Sir, for—it's our dinner hour.

Sir C. How unlucky we dine so late, you should else dine with me.

Sharpe. Sir—Sir—consider; a peasant girl to sit at the same table with Sir Charles Courtall, Baronet, M. P. Magistrate, and married man—

Sir C. So much the better.—If I am married, no one will suspect the purity of my intentions. As to my rank—virtue enobles its lowliest possessor; and high station never appears more glorious than in the company of modesty and beauty. The rarity too of their being seen together makes the sight more lovely. (*to Grace.*) We'll dine together—but how unlucky—we have no dinner ready.

Enter LABROCHE, (R.—) *running to Sharpe.*

Lab. Monsieur Sharpe—Monsieur Sharpe—Faut-il servir? Le diner is ready; all so nice.

Sharpe. (*aside.*) I wish the devil had you, you French hollyhock, for your news.

Sir C. What, a dinner at this hour?

Lab. Yes, Sare—Monsieur Sharpe tell it to me to apprêter nice diner, and so I make him cook all myself, and I do not leave it to nobody at all.

Sir C. Sharpe, you are the Sultan of careful servants.—(*aside.*) I never saw his equal. (*to Labroche.*) Tell them to lay the table here in the garden. (*Exit Labroche,* R.) Under the shade of these trees the repast will be delicious. What says Grace?

Sharpe. (*aside.*) Oh, she'll say Grace fast enough, I warrant me!

Grace. I will go and ask my mother, Sir.

Sir C. I will take you home, and bring you back myself. Here, John, (*enter* JOHN, R.—), let the curricle be got ready immediately.

John. It's all ready, Sir.

Sir C. How!

John. Mr. Sharpe ordered it out, Sir.

Sir C. Oh, I'm quite overpowered by these repeated proofs of his zeal and foresight—I can never sufficiently repay such services. Here, Sharpe, (*giving him money.*) half my fortune is not too much for such a servant.

Sharpe. (*aside.*) What a pretty figure I cut! How like a nincompoop I look!—Sir, I'm afraid her mother will be very uneasy—she'll think some accident has happened—I'm sure she'll have the fidgets about her.

Sir C. Right, right again; so do you run and tranquilize the old lady.

Sharpe. What? I, Sir?—Hadn't you better send John?

Sir C. No, no—you can best manage matters.—You can tell a plausible tale—a lie, better than any man I know.

Sharpe. Oh, you flatter me, Sir!—I assure you, John can lie better than I do—can't you John?

[*John shakes his head, and exit* R.

Sir C. No more replies—go at once.

Sharpe. I go, Sir.—(*aside.*) But you little think what I mean to do; I'll spoil your sport, secure as you may imagine it. [*Exit* R.

Sir C. I feel such satisfaction in the company of beauty and innocence, that I am determined to have a fête once a-year, to which every pretty girl in the village shall be invited; though I can never expect to find any to compare with thee, love.

Grace. Oh, Sir! I am sure I don't deserve half the compliments you pay me.

Sir C. Not deserve them! May I never have a kiss in my life again, if you—(*he attempts to kiss Grace—Sharpe re-enters,* (R.—) *with a towel under his arm, and some plates in his hand, which he lets fall and breaks.*) Clumsy blockhead, see how you have frightened her!

Sharpe. I was only running to say, Sir, that the kiss—the dinner is coming.

[*Dinner is served near the pavilion—Servants all leave* R. *except John, who remains.*

Sir C. Sharpe!—Why you must have flown—you can never have been—

Sharpe. (*trying to find an excuse.*) I—I was thinking, Sir, that—that you might be better pleased if *I* waited on you. In such a case as the present, a prudent servant, you know, Sir—

Sir C. True, true, and you are always prudent.

[*leads Grace to the table; he sits* R. H. *she* L.

Sharpe. (*aside.*) I mean to be so; and one great proof shall be, not to leave you a moment alone, if I can help it.

Grace. (*aside.*) If some of my acquaintance were to see me now, how they would fret!

Sir C. Come, Grace, my love, you don't eat.

Grace. The joy, Sir—the honour, Sir—takes away my appetite. (*eats hastily.*)

Sharpe. (*aside.*) Neither one nor the other has taken away mine, for I am as hungry as the devil. Here I stand with my napkin in my hand, instead of having it tucked under my chin. How she eats!—and how he ogles and helps her!

Sir C. Sharpe, some wine.

Sharpe. Yes, Sir. [*fills two glasses.*

Grace. Mister Sharpe, your good health; not forgetting yours, Sir. (*to Sir Charles.*)

Sir C. (*to Sharpe.*) Isn't she a charming creature?

Sharpe. Hum—so—so—at first sight, perhaps, but—

Sir C. What a bewitching smile!

Sharpe. Smile, Sir?—A great deal more like a grin.

Sir C. Then her eyes!

Sharpe. Dull, Sir, dull, and green as gooseberries.

Sir C. Dull to you, you clod; but sparkling to souls of fire.

John. (*aside to Sharpe.*) His honour's right—they are pretty twinklers.

Sharpe. Oh, this is too much!—What business have you to put in your spoke?—Go to the devil, you—

[*kicks John off.* R.

Sir C. More wine.

Sharpe. Yes, Sir. (*aside.*) I wish it would choke him!

[*In his confusion, he looks at Grace and fills a saltcellar with the wine.*

Sir C. What are you about?—Fill the glass, and not the saltcellar. (*Sharpe fills two glasses, and, without seeming to know what he is about, takes up one and drinks it off.*) The fellow's mad!—Leave the table, impudent varlet—Did you ever see so blundering an animal? Come, I will be your cup-bearer. [*they drink.*

Grace. (*aside.*) I'll punish William, if it's only in remembrance of the gooseberries.

Sharpe. (*aside.*) I shall go mad if this lasts a quarter of an hour longer!

Sir C. How many lovers have you, my pretty Grace?

Grace. Only one.

Sir C. Only one?—Impossible!

Grace. Only one, I assure you, Sir.

Sir C. Lucky dog!—But he's a handsome, well-made fellow—

Grace. At first sight, perhaps, but—

Sir C. Sprightly, lively.

Grace. Dull, Sir, dull as small beer.

Sir C. A stupid fellow, that can only twirl his thumbs or scratch his head—jealous too, perhaps?

Grace. I am afraid he is—indeed, I am sure he is—and the next time he catches me alone—mercy on me!

Sharpe. (*aside.*) If it wasn't for that cursed pension, I'd tell the whole truth.—Humph! [*stamping.*

Sir C. What's the matter?

Sharpe. (*startled.*) The—cramp, Sir;—only the cramp, Sir.

Sir C. Have you prepared a desert, too?

Sharpe. (*aside.*) Desert?—I wish you had your deserts. I can't stand it—I—Oh, I'll open the whole business at once! Sir, since the truth must out, Grace and—

Enter THOMAS. R.

Thomas. Sir, Lady Courtall is coming up the lime-tree walk.

Sir C. What, Lady Courtall coming?

Thomas. Yes, Sir.

Sharpe. I'm saved—Phu! I breathe again.

Sir C. There quick, quick, away with those chairs and tables, and every thing. (*considerable bustle and confusion—Sir Charles and the Servant clearing away—Grace running about in alarm—Sharpe appears spitefully to enjoy the scene, now and then following Grace.*) Why don't you assist and not keep running about so, you scoundrel? As for you my pretty one, I can't give you a ride home to-day, so you had better make all the haste you can by yourself. (*runs with Grace to the small gate.*) Zounds, it's locked!—where's the key, Sharpe?

Sharpe. The key, Sir?

Sir C. Yes, the key.

Sharpe. (*takes it out of his pocket looks at it, puts it in again, and pretends to search for it.*) I have lost it, Sir.

Sir C. Death and the Devil!—What's to be done?—My wife will suspect the innocence of my motives, and this pretty creature will seem as if—Hark, she's coming! Run into the pavilion; it's the only refuge left.

[*Exit Grace into pavilion.* L.

Enter LADY COURTALL, *from gates,* SIR CHARLES *runs to meet and embrace her.*

Lady C. Oh, my dear Sir Charles, how happy I am to see you once more! I feared I should not arrive in time: but are you quite recovered, quite, quite?

Sir C. Reeovered! What do you mean? What brought you back so soon?

Lady C. Do not be surprised; I know all.

Sir C. All, Lady Courtall, *(alarmed.)* all, what all?

Lady C. See—this little note, written with a pencil, was placed in my hand by a boy, mounted on one of your horses.

Sir C. (after reading the note, and aside.) Who the devil ean take so lively an interest in my health?—Sharpe, do you know the hand? [*crosses to centre.*

Sharpe. No, Sir, no.—I havn't the slightest idea—*(aside.)* My own little note.

Sir C. I'd give something to know whom to reward for this kindness.

Lady C. I am so glad it was but a false alarm—that the danger was not so great as my informer thought it.

Sharpe. It was rather serious, though, Madam, while it lasted.

Lady C. If it ever should oeeur again, I rely upon you, Sharpe, for an immediate notice.

Sharpe. I will not fail to give instant notiee to your ladyship, depend upon it.

Sir C. Come, my dear, it's all over now; will you take a walk? (*aside to Sharpe.*) Contrive to get Grace away.

Lady C. I have been much flurried; I had rather rest in this pavilion a few minutes.

Sir C. The pavilion?

Lady C. Yes; why not?

Sir C. Why to tell you—(*aside to Sharpe.*) Invent—lie—swear: say something to get me out of this infernal serape!

Sharpe. I will, Sir—Her ladyship little expects to find in the pavilion—a—a—but I hope she will excuse—

Lady C. Find what?—excuse what?—

Sharpe. A smart, pretty little woman, that I brought to—

Lady C. What! A woman brought to the Hall in my absence?

Sir C. (*with affected anger.*) How, a female!—(*aside to Sharpe.*) Admirable!—admirable!—keep it up!

Sharpe. I will, Sir,—better than you expect. [*aside.*

Sir C. This must be explained, Sir—this audacity—

Sharpe. Sir—Madam—I blush to say it; but the innocent cause of this confusion is—is—my wife.

Lady C. } Your wife!
Sir C. }

Sharpe. (*aside.*) Oh, my poor pension, there it goes!—Sir Charles always insisted upon having none but bachelors about him, and, dreading his displeasure, I kept my marriage a secret.—My wife is virtuous, simple and obliging—Sir Charles attentive to the slightest want or wish of his amiable lady, ordered me to look out for an attendant on your ladyship, and I confess, I did wish to solicit your kindness for poor Mrs. S. and the forgiveness of my generous master for me.

Sir C. (*aside.*) Upon my life, that fellow has the most admirable stock of invention!—his lies are so abundant and so natural!

Lady C. My dear Sir Charles, how warmly my heart acknowledges the delicacy of those little attentions on your part. Sharpe, let me see your choice.

[*Exeunt Sharpe and Lady Courtall into pavilion,* L.
Sharpe and Sir Charles exchanging signs.

Sir C. Was there ever such an extempore? As I live, one might have believed every word he uttered. That fellow's a treasure! How cleverly he introduced a wife to our notice! His sudden marriage, however, released me from a most disagreeable predicament. How easily a man may lose his character by an awkward concommittance of circumstances. (*hypocritically.*) Lady Courtall might have become jealous, although I was so innocently engaged with that charming sample of rustic simplicity.

Enter LADY COURTALL.

Lady C. What a delightful surprise you have afforded me—I am quite delighted with the simplicity and ingenuousness of the new bride.

Sir C. Do you think she will do?

Lady C. I feel sure of it. And poor Sharpe, he seems to doat on her!—He's so kind, so affectionate!—His animation when he presented her to me, bespoke the sincerity of conjugal love.—How gratifying it is to witness such connubial happiness in others, when all at one's own home breathes the same spirit of mutual tenderness.

Sir C. Oh, my charming reciprocity of sentiment! (*embraces Lady Courtall, looking over her shoulder towards the pavilion.*) What the devil makes them stay so long?

Lady C. (*stifling a laugh.*) Turning towards a looking glass, I saw him—

Sir C. Saw him!—

Lady C. Steal a kiss.

Sir C. And you permitted him?

Lady C My dear Sir Charles, could I find fault at a husband's stealing a sly caress?

Sir C. A husband! under that name he might.—Besides, Lady Courtall, you know how strict I am upon the score of morality and decency.

Lady C. I think I have seen you less severe.

Sir C. Never!—I must lecture Mister Sharpe a little.

Lady C. Not for what has just passed.

Sir C. No—for something else.

Lady C. That indeed—(*crosses to* R.—) I'll go and give orders to get a room ready for Grace, near our own.

[*Exit* R.

Enter SHARPE *from pavilion.* L.

Sir C. So, Sir, you're come at last; you've been a plaguy long time in the pavilion.

Sharpe. (*aloud, as if for Lady Courtall to hear him.*) I beg your pardon, Sir, but my wife—

Sir C. Your wife!—

Sharpe. Yes, Sir: I was giving her a little advice as to her future conduct, now my lady has taken her into her service; and you know, Sir—

Sir C. I do know, Sir, that you are a scoundrel, and that I have a mind to horsewhip you within an inch of your life.

Sharpe. That's a good joke.

Sir C. I see how it is: you would be the ruin of that young creature!—You would take advantage of her sim-

plicity and inexperience.—Under my roof too, where you know an outrage to morality would—

Sharpe. Upon my soul, Sir—

Sir C. Don't swear, Sir.—What did you mean by that stolen kiss, eh?

Sharpe. (*aside.*) Who the devil could have told him that?

Sir C. You're trying to fudge up another lie; are you?

Sharpe. No, Sir; I scorn it, Sir—I—I—I did kiss her; but it was to promote your interest. I saw that my lady was not quite convinced by the tale I told her, in order to relieve you from your quandary just now, I didn't know what to do to put it out of all manner of doubt, so, Sir, I—I—I thought of something desperate—and I kissed her—and I think you ought to be obliged to me, for I am sure it has settled your business. But it is always thus; servants may wear their very lives out, and their masters think they never go far enough.

Sir C. Quite the contrary; I think you have gone a great deal too far. Besides, I have a shrewd suspicion that this something *desperate* was in your own service.

Sharpe. Sir!

Sir C. You cannot deceive me—Grace is coming this way. You see that bower? (R.—) I will conceal myself there, see every motion, hear every whisper—I shall now put both your zeal and fidelity to the proof.—You understand?—

Sharpe. But, Sir, suppose she herself—suppose Grace should—should take a liking to me—should absolutely court me, shall I be to blame?—Consider, Sir, the frailty of human nature, I would do anything to promote your interest or your pleasure, but if a pretty girl should prefer—

Sir C. I am easy upon that score, quite easy. Now have a care: if you become *desperate* again, you shall first get a ducking in the horse-pond, and then be kicked out of doors.—What think ye of my promise?

Sharpe. That it would be more honoured in the breach than the observance.

Sir C. Remember—no desperation!

[*retires into the bower, from which he occasionally peeps.*

Enter GRACE, *from pavilion.* L.

Grace. What a dear good lady that is!—We shall be so happy now, because we shall stand in need of no further disguise.

Sir C. What does she say?

Sharpe. (*endeavours by signs to make her comprehend that she must not talk so loudly, but finding every effort useless, exclaims aside.*) Here's a pretty situation!—If I speak, I lose my place; if I hold my tongue, I lose my wife—what the devil shall I do?

Grace. I may now tell everybody that you are my husband.

Sharpe. (*with forced cheerfulness.*) Your husband! Come, come, Grace, you must not carry the joke too far. Husband and wife!—That's very well sometimes; but—

Grace. A husband in joke!—And have I only been carrying on a joke all this while?—Very well, Sir, (*controuling her tears.*) very well—I needn't break my heart about you; I can get plenty of husbands upon the same terms.

Sharpe. (*aside.*) Yes, that would just crown the business.—Hear me, Grace—(*aside.*) I must humour her, or she'll spoil all—(*in a low tone.*) Certainly, yes, I am your husband—(*aloud for Sir Charles to hear; whilst he is making signs to Grace, that his master is in the bower.*) Sir Charles—the honour—who deserves my—If I were my own master, indeed—but my duty, my conscience—curse it—don't you understand me?

Grace. Not very clearly; but I dare say, it means, you are sorry for what you have done, and so I forgive you—there, you may take a kiss.

Sir C. (*aside.*) Take a kiss!

Sharpe. (*looks towards the bower—Sir Charles makes threatening signs.*) I wish I durst.

Grace. What! you won't? very well, Sir—I don't care.—I—I—I will go and complain of your cruelty to my lady, so I will!

Sharpe. Oh, Lord! Oh, Lord!

Grace. I'll tell Sir Charles of it—he won't treat me so; he's a polite, good-natured gentleman.

Enter LADY COURTALL. R.

Lady C. Bless me!—What's the matter?—Quarrelling!—Oh, fie!

Sharpe. It's her fault, my lady.

Grace. No, it's all his fault, my lady.

Sharpe. I wished to—

Grace. No, he didn't wish: and when I offered him a kiss just now, he would not take it.

Lady C. Refuse to kiss your wife when she asks you I'm ashamed of you.—Come, this must not be: I insist upon a reconciliation.

Sharpe. With all submission to your ladyship—*(turns towards Sir Charles, shrugs his shoulders as much as to say —"you see I can't help it")* as you insist upon it—*(kisses Grace boisterously.)* there—My dear Grace, forget what's past, and I will be a good boy for the future.

Grace. Oh, dear, my heart is ready to jump out of my bosom with joy!

Sir C. *(comes forward with severity, between Grace and Sharpe.)* Still here, Sir, after what I said to you.

Sharpe. *(aside.)* I'm lost—pension, place, and all! There they go—good bye. [*crosses to* R. H. *corner.*

Grace. Oh, pray, Sir, do not turn my husband away?

Sir C. (*aside.*) Her husband! The jade sticks to it.

Lady C. You won't turn the poor young man away, my dear?

Sir C. Yes, my love, I most undoubtedly will, and for very good reasons. He knows why I discharge him.

Sharpe. I, Sir? No, Sir, upon my soul, I don't!

Lady C. Do not reply now; go into the house; I'll speak for you—I'll intercede. You will, (*to Sir C.*) allow them to sleep here to-night?

Sir C. Lady Courtall!

Lady C. (*to Sharpe and Grace.*) There—there—go in. To-morrow let me see you; you know your room.

Grace. Come, William—

Sir C. Are you really sending them off together?

Lady C. No, my dear; it is you who are sending them away.

Sir C. But, Lady Courtall—they—they are not married, if the truth must out.

Lady C. Not married!

Sir C. Not married.

Grace. (*to Sharpe.*) What, don't he know that—

Sharpe. Hush!

Lady C. I am confounded!—so gentle—so apparently innocent—so pretty.

Sir C. Yes, yes, all that, if you please, but still not married. To think of the hypocrisy of this world! I quite loved that man; and as for her, I thought if she was as good as she was handsome, I should quite love her too. But after such moral turpitude, I should fear to have them under the same roof with me. Nothing in the world could make me part with them but such conduct as they have been guilty of.

Sharpe. And would you, indeed, Sir, have kept us if we had really been married? (*in a tone of mock humility. He takes two papers from pocket, which Grace snatches from him and presents to Sir Charles.*)

Grace. That will convince you, Sir, of the real truth. (*to Sharpe.*) You're so slow.

Sir C. Have you placed yourself under him to learn the true art of fibbing? This is some other forged tale. (*to Sharpe.*)

Sharpe. Authentic documents, Sir: certificate of marriage, and attestation of character, (*crosses to Sir Charles.*) which I hope you will have the kindness to sign for the satisfaction of Grace's friends.

Sir C. (*Reads.*) Hum—"married,—4th of June,—Church—William Sharpe,—Grace Jenkins,—Reverend Tye'emtight."—(*Reads the second note.*) "This is to certify, that William Sharpe, Steward to Sir Charles Courtall."—Steward!

Lady C. You remember that you promised him the situation.

Sharpe. If you will, Sir, kindly subscribe that certificate of my good behaviour—

Sir C. And so under sign manual, confirm you as my steward! Now is it really possible, that, for once, you can have told the truth?

Sharpe. Every thing must have a beginning—(*aside to Sir Charles.*) Besides, Sir, I did not encroach upon your rights; you came poaching on my manor.

Sir C. (*crosses to* L.— *aside.*) I cannot help laughing when I think of the ridiculous figure Sharpe cut with the napkin under his arm—Come, I forgive all. You shall remain with me and be my steward. I only looked to honour and morality in all I did; those indispensable qualities attended to, I—I shall be glad to have Grace near me; and the world shall own that Courtly Hall can boast of two happy couple.

Grace. Then we are married now, for ever and ever!

Sharpe. We are indeed—(*to the audience.*) and I hope our best friends will deign their indulgent acceptance of

"The Married Bachelor; or, Master and Man."

DISPOSITION OF THE CHARACTERS AT THE FALL OF THE CURTAIN.

Sharpe. Grace. Lady Courtall. Sir Charles.

R. L.

THE END.